

## You Never Had A Heart

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# **You Never Had A Heart**

by [HotCrossPigeon](#)

## Summary

Aziraphale finds himself unwittingly ensnared in a demonic trap.

Unfortunately for a panicking Crowley, there's only one way to get the angel out of it.

# Blame The Profiteroles

## Chapter Notes

Hello. It's me again :)

This one's for [SightKeeper \(GarrulousGibberish\)](#) who recently drew some gorgeous art for my other story, *So Still I Wait*. Please go check it out [here](#), it's beautiful! I'm overwhelmed by their generosity and talent, and this is just a little something to say thank you.

Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Crowley didn't know what he expected to find when his *Aziraphale's-in-trouble-again-because-he-genuinely-finds-pleasure-in-dragging-a-certain-besotted-demon-out-of-bed-to-come-rescue-him* senses went off at six in the morning.

The sensation had tickled the scales all up his back like a serpentine xylophone, and fizzed audibly on his forked tongue, and he had rolled out of his comfy spot on the ceiling with a grumble about needy angels and their lack of respect for a good eighteen hours sleep.

No, he hadn't known then what to expect, but, well... it definitely wasn't *this*.

When he finally found the angel, Aziraphale was trussed up like a turkey in some God-forsaken alleyway somewhere in bloody Pimlico.

What had the idiot gotten himself into now? They'd only seen each other last night, for crying out loud. Couldn't the angel keep his ethereal nose clean for a couple of measly hours?

Clearly not.

Crowley adjusted his eyes to the darkness, the slitted pupils widening and sclera bleeding yellow. The air in this narrow alleyway was heavy and saturated with squirming Hellish shadows. The angel was like a tiny beige clothes moth caught in a sprawling cobweb.

Aziraphale was bound with occult manacles on his wrists and ankles, there were dark, almost alive chains attached to them that snaked halfway up his limbs like a creeper vine.

It was debauched, is what it was. Crowley had some very, very loud thoughts about it. He stuffed them down into his mind with the rest of the sordid imaginings he'd had over the course of their relationship. There were a lot.

The angel licking creme brûlée off a teaspoon. The bottom wiggle he sometimes did when he got too excited, as seen from all angles. That time in the Roman baths when his skin got all pink and -

All right enough of that.

It had been a long six millennia of pining, with little relief, all right? Give him a break. And yeah, he wasn't proud of it, but that was the truth of the matter. He really was quite pathetically smitten, actually.

Aziraphale's entire being lit up when he saw the demon slinking towards him. Crowley was almost offended by the sheer amount of relief and joy he found himself suddenly smacked in the face with.

"*There* you are, Crowley! Thank goodness! It certainly took you long enough. I've been waiting nearly *forty-five minutes*. My dear, I hate to say this, but you may be losing your touch."

The angel looked awfully miffed at the situation he found himself in, as well he should be, really. Didn't look like much fun, being restrained like that... Except, it did. It really did. If Crowley were bolder he might've suggested a few things that could have improved this situation inordinately.

*All right, get your thoughts out of the gutter, for Christ's sake. S'too early.*

"I seem to have gotten myself into a spot of bother," continued Aziraphale, and he pouted, obscenely. The angel's plump cheeks were tinged an embarrassed rose-pink, and his wrists looked chafed from where he'd obviously been tugging at the restraints. And Sssatan, it wasn't endearing, at all. It wasn't adorable. It definitely wasn't sexy.

*Sometimes, Crowley thought, the angel brought it upon himself.*

He must know. Surely, he knew what he did to the demon when he looked like that.

"Mornin' angel." Crowley looked Aziraphale up and down over the top of his sunglasses, mouth curling with a small appreciative smirk, "What's all this, then? Is it my birthday?"

"Oh, don't poke fun," pleaded the angel, tucking his head down until the soft skin of his chin met his bow tie, "I'm in an awful pickle."

Crowley took in the manacles with a low whistle, "Didn't take this for your kind of scene, angel, but hey, I'm open to it."

"*Crowley.*"

"Oh, all *right*," he sighed. "Let me take a look."

"I believe it to be a demonic trap of sorts," explained the angel, as Crowley pressed closer so that he could examine the restraints with a frown of concentration. "I'm afraid, in my attempt to dismantle the terrible thing, I might have inadvertently gotten a little... stuck."

Crowley sniffed, nostrils flaring and tongue flickering out. He'd know that demonic stench anywhere. It had the cloying putrefaction of maggots wiggling in flesh. An underlying scent of boggy marshland, and unwashed bodies. He didn't know if it was possible for someone to actually smell like a warty old toad, but - wait, did toads even have a smell? Eh. Anyway. It smelled a lot like warty old toad, too.

"*Hastur*," he concluded with a scowl.

Well, shit.

"He's not the chap with the large amphibian on his head, is he? Oh, Good Lord," Aziraphale reeled back in dismay at Crowley's grunt of affirmation, his pink lip pulling back in distaste, "not that *ghastly* fellow! I've had the misfortune of crossing paths with his ilk before. Do you know," said the angel, with a haughty sniff, "he once attempted to devour me with those awful maggots of his? It's one of the only times I've seriously considered smiting someone. Luckily, it didn't come to that, but I was sorely tempted. Just *imagine* what the contemptuous creature would do to me if he were to find me in such a vulnerable position. It simply doesn't bear thinking about!"

He blinked his pretty blue eyes, and Crowley was done for.

"I don't suppose you could, possibly... help me out...?" The angel wheedled, effortlessly tempting.

"You take so much bloody looking after," grumbled Crowley, as he graciously, and inevitably, acquiesced to the angel's demands.

Crowley tried his very best, he really did, but it was no use. The restraints held fast against everything he threw at them. He should have suspected that to be the case really, *Hastur* was a Duke of Hell after all. His powers were potent and malicious - Crowley's low-level mischief couldn't hope to compare to that sort of horrible thing.

It looked to be a fairly simple set up, wait 'til a bumbling angel comes along, then the influence on these hellfire forged restraints caused them to come to life like some low budget horror film. And ta-da! One grumpy trapped angel with a pair of big doe eyes that could skewer you at thirty paces.

'Course, technically speaking, demons weren't supposed to trap and torture angels. There was an unspoken agreement between Heaven and Hell about that sort of thing. Otherwise, it'd just be a massive free for all. Dead bodies everywhere. Overloaded reincarnation department. Traumatized humans. The lot. But, that didn't mean that these things didn't still happen. Demons were demons, after all. And Crowley was pretty sure some of the twats upstairs used the lower rank hellions to blow off a little steam, too.

In another dimension, just slightly to the left of this one, Crowley could see the angel's true form being contained. It was like trying to see him through a thick wall of ice. Nothing but a dispersed glow, a dimmed lantern.

“You tried burning them off yourself? Divine essence, or whatever it is when you do the weird thousand eyes thing?” Crowley wiggled his fingers to further emphasise the sheer amount of mind-boggling ethereal eyes that he knew Aziraphale hated to talk about. “You know, all that blinding holy lightning stuff.”

“No,” scowled the angel, looking like he wanted very much to fold his arms, crossly. “I thought it better to just hang around the place waiting for you to turn up like a - a one-dimensional damsel in distress character in some terribly written erotica.”

Crowley raised his eyebrows, contemplatively. He wouldn’t put it past the angel to do just that, actually, especially if he wanted some attention, or was angling for an invite to dinner.

“*Erotica*, eh?” He said, waggling his eyebrows suggestively, with all the subtlety of a lecherous old man with his nose stuck in page three of *The Sun*. “My my, angel, don’t tease.”

Aziraphale rolled his eyes, “Of *course* I attempted to free myself! However, this trap seems to have a dampening effect on my powers. I’m practically human, right now. Oh, I *knew* I should never have taken that detour to the bakery. It’s just that their profiteroles are - quite literally, it seems - to die for. Just the right amount of whipped cream, and the chocolate ganache - oh! Positively sinful. And they always open early for me, you know, I’m quite the favoured customer.”

“I thought you said you got trapped trying to dismantle this thing? Or did you just wander blindly into it daydreaming about bloody choux pastry?”

“I did nothing of the sort!” huffed the angel, “It was merely on my way, and I happened to notice it, and of course I couldn’t just leave such a nasty old thing out in the open for anyone to stumble across. Can you imagine if an inexperienced angel, out on day release, got caught up in the dratted thing? Oh, no, no. *Unthinkable*. No. It was my sworn angelic duty to get rid of the awful contraption - of course, then I... well, I might have *accidentally* doomed myself in the process, but these things happen I suppose.”

These things didn’t just bloody happen, actually. The angel was notorious in his meddling. He just couldn’t leave well enough alone.

Aziraphale sagged slightly, disheartened. “Well, if you aren’t having any luck with it, then I can see no other way forward. I’ll just have to disincorporate.”

Crowley startled. “Oi. Bit early for that sort of talk, isn’t it? Give me a bit of time, I just bloody got here.”

Half an hour later, and Crowley was ready to admit that Aziraphale had gotten himself good and caught, wrapped up tighter than a certain serpent during the winter months. Short of gnawing the angel’s limbs off, there was no way that Crowley could break him free without somehow convincing Hastur to let him go.

And that, despite Crowley’s efficiency at manipulation, blackmail and charm, was *never* gonna happen.

Hastur was a twat.

“If you’re quite finished,” interrupted the angel, patience now wearing thin, if the slightly raised eyebrow was any indication.

“I’ll think of something! You can’t just disincorporate - you haven’t even thought it through properly, have you? You’ll get in trouble, for one thing. Oodles of trouble. Gabriel’ll get all up your arse over it, and I’ll have to listen to you whinging about it for ages. Plus, there’ll be a shit tonne of paperwork.”

“Oh, the paperwork,” Aziraphale closed his eyes in melancholy. And then blinked them open, something like resignation in them, which Crowley didn’t like the look of in the slightest. “You’re right, it is always such a faff, getting issued with a new corporation, but it’s still far better than the alternative. Namely, being subjected to the nefarious whims of that awful chap and his repulsive toad headpiece. Oh, Crowley. You simply have to help, before he can get his bepustled mitts anywhere near me. I... well, I suppose I should be grateful that you turned up when you did.”

He looked pointedly at the demon then. Expectantly.

As if he actually - as if he *actually bloody thought that* -

Crowley felt a cold horror settle over him.

“*Me?*” He squawked, “I’m not bloody doing it!”

“Of course you are,” insisted the angel, brightly, “you’d hardly leave me tied up here, defenceless, with another demon on the prowl, would you? No, no, much better to have you do it, my dear.”

“I can’t.” *I can’t, don’t make me. Please.* Anything but this. He’d gargle with holy water, he’d spend a century in Hell’s administration department, he’d clip Ligur’s colourful lizardy toenails. Anything - literally, anything else. At all.

“Oh don’t be silly, I’ve disincorporated you on a number of occasions and it’s really nothing to be afraid of. In my experience, it’s best to do it quickly. Get it over with, as it were.”

Yeah, the angel had disincorporated him, sure, but it’d mostly been accidental. *Whoops, sorry old chap, I hadn’t known you were inside when I collapsed that building on your head. Do forgive me.* That sort of thing.

“I’ve *never* disincorporated you.” Crowley bit the words behind his teeth, chewed them up and spat them out. “I don’t plan to start now.”

“Well,” implored Aziraphale, “all the more reason for you to take advantage of this happy circumstance that’s dropped neatly into your lap! High time you evened the odds a little, don’t you think. You’re sure to receive a commendation from Below, at any rate.”

“No. No way. I’m not going to just - just *kill* you.”

“You’re not killing me, Crowley. That’s the point! You’re merely doing away with this vaguely human-shaped body. It may be a little disconcerting at first, but I assure you, you’ll be doing no harm to my actual ethereal self and I’ll be back in no time at all. Don’t fret.”

“I’m not fretting. Why would I be fretting? I’ve wanted to murder you loads of times.”

The angel treated him to a slow blink. “Of course, my mistake, I’m sure your tongue always forks like that when you’re not fretting. Anticipatory, is it?”

Crowley sucked the offending organ back in behind his teeth, and glared.

Aziraphale didn’t seem to be paying his ire any mind, he remained obstinate. “Don’t make me ask you again, it’s unseemly of an angel to beseech a demon for help.”

Except it wasn’t help, was it?

“Help is a rescue, angel.” Crowley said, the words tasting bitter, “Help is *not killing you*.”

Help involved Crowley bursting into whatever ridiculous situation the angel had wandered blindly into, looking dashing, and roguish, and devilishly handsome. It involved sweeping Aziraphale off his tan brogues until he giggled and called him a sly old serpent and begged to please be put back down this instant because Crowley was rumpling his new jacket. It involved a very nice lunch out afterwards, three bottles of good wine, and then a snifter of brandy at the bookshop with a sozzled angel who might even deign to pat him gently on the knee with an impossibly warm hand.

It *didn’t* involve killing his best friend.

Aziraphale didn’t seem to realise this. “Oh you’re making a - a mountain out of a mollusk, Crowley -!” He insisted, and might have flapped a flippant hand about if he’d been able.

Why. Why did he love this stupid angel. Why. “It’s *molehill*, making a mountain out of a molehill.”

Aziraphale blinked at him, “Is it really? Oh. A *mole*...? Are you sure?”

Crowley slapped his own head. “*Yes!* That’s not even a modern idiom, angel! Christ’s sake. Your speech patterns are stuck in the bloody 12th century half the time! And - and anyway, I’m bloody well not!”

“Hmmpf. You most certainly are, you’re quite clearly making a mountain out of a mole’s hill, actually. You should just get this whole blasted ordeal over with and be done with it,” Aziraphale grumbled, quite unreasonably.

“I can’t kill you,” said the demon, through gritted teeth. Even though, at the moment, the angel was pushing his luck. “Don’t ask me to.”

“Well, that’s very kind of you,” said Aziraphale, “to not wish to kill me. Very chivalrous, noble, admirable, even.”



Crowley sucked in a lungful of air through his teeth. “*Don’t say that -*”

“But I need you to put aside your ridiculous hero complex, for the moment, and think logically. I cannot escape this trap. If you leave me here, another demon will do unspeakable things to my person. The only way to avoid that is to disincorporate, and I need your help to accomplish that. It’s really rather simple.”

Crowley just looked at him, heart thudding in his ears. Yeah, that sounded perfectly fucking logical didn’t it.

“Can’t you just... pull one of your escapee magician tricksy things?”

“I’m sorry,” said the angel, looking anything but. His eyes narrowed, “What is it that you expect me to do?”

The demon shrugged. “Thought you were friends with Houdini for a bit. You know. Can’t you just, pull a fast one or something?”

“Crowley, *really*. I’ll have you know, there’s quite a bit of difference between the art of human escapology, and springing oneself from a powerful demonic trap made specifically to bind an angel and all ethereal powers therein. I’d appreciate it if you didn’t attempt to mock me, I’m having a bad enough day as it is, thank you.”

Crowley’s day wasn’t shaping up to be a particularly good one either.

“Now. You were just telling me the other day how much you wished to throttle me, and while a little strangulation wouldn’t outright disincorporate me, if you have it in you to channel a little of that anger into this current situation, that would be wonderful.”

For fuck’s sake, he had to bring that up, didn’t he? As if Crowley could feel any worse.

“There’s nothing to it,” assured the angel with a small smile, “Just one swift manoeuvre and it’s all over and done with. Now, I don’t suppose you’d be willing to cut off my head?”

Crowley grimaced in actual, physical pain at the thought of - of - “Jesus *Christ*, angel! Oh right, yeah - I’ll just lop your bloody head off with my demonic claws, shall I?”

Aziraphale considered it, with a small hum. “Well, it might be a nasty way to go, but at least it would be quick.”

“What? Fuck! No, angel, *no*. I’m not doing that! What the hell is wrong with you?”

“No? Well, if you’re quite sure,” pondered Aziraphale, with a squint of his eyes in thought, “I suppose it might be a bit too gruesome, mightn’t it? Messy, too. Hmm. Well, there really aren’t many options to ensure a full disincorporation. You could sever my carotid artery, though as previously mentioned, it might make a bit of a mess. Or, perhaps a poison? Though, should that other demon witness it, he might think you’ve gone soft.”

Crowley could barely believe what he was hearing.

“Oh, I know! It’ll have to be the heart,” he indicated his chest with a dart of his blue eyes, the eyelashes flicking downwards and fanning out over his cheekbone, “Yes, that’ll do nicely, the reliable old ticker. Just run it through with something sharp, and I’ll take care of the rest. It’ll be quick and painless, and with any luck, the bleeding will be mostly internal.”

With any luck.

With any fucking luck.

*What.*

It was difficult to disincorporate an angel. They didn’t technically need to breathe, or have a heartbeat, or anything mortal bodies needed to do to survive. If the angel weren’t caught in this trap, it would have just been a bit of an annoyance, being stabbed. Aziraphale might tut, and miracle it all better with an extravagant wave of his hand, as if he were conducting an orchestra, and the wound would knit back together cleanly. He might wiggle a finger through the newly acquired hole in his shirt, dismay apparent, but that would be all.

Caught in this trap, the angel was almost, frighteningly, human.

Crowley was shaking his head before he even realised it. “Can’t,” he breathed, because the world had gone mad, this was a nightmare, he should slap himself in the face and wake up, “Can’t do it. Nope.”

Aziraphale looked at him with a mildly annoyed expression, that definitely didn’t do the situation justice. As if Crowley had refused to pick up his suit from the dry cleaners, or his favourite pastries from the local patisserie.

“Need I remind you,” he stated, primly, “that we’re on a rather tight schedule here? We don’t have time for dilly dallying around - your coworker could happen upon us at any moment, and it’ll have to look convincing! I didn’t take you for the squeamish sort. Just, be a dear, and miracle up a knife, already.”

Crowley swallowed, but did just that. In truth, he was utterly terrified, and listening to the angel sounded better than listening to the swirl of God awful thoughts in his head that were mostly yelling at him to throw up, punch himself in the face, or flee, screaming all the while.

Aziraphale regarded the recently acquired weapon, with a critical eye, “Oh no, that’ll never do. It’ll have to be much sharper and thinner, or you’ll never be able to reach my heart on the first go.”

Crowley felt the knife morph under his hands until it was deadly and needlepointed, and he wanted nothing more than to turn the blade around and jab it repeatedly into his own eye socket just to get himself out of this - whatever the Hell this was - worse than Hell - this absolute sodding *torture* -

“All right, now just, press it against my chest - a little to the left - that’s it, and hold it steady.”

Crowley swallowed audibly. His hand was shaking. "What now?" He managed to snap. Because he didn't think he could do it. He couldn't do it. He actually, physically couldn't do it. In fact, he wasn't going to bloody do it, even if the angel asked him to.

Aziraphale took a small breath in, probably to steady his nerves, and he didn't look at Crowley. His grey eyes were fixed on the knife, a pink tongue peeping out to wet his lips. "Well now, I'll... I'll simply... push into it," he said, with a false confidence that rung like a dull bell between them.

They both waited for a few moments.

Crowley holding the knife and trembling, and Aziraphale probably attempting to convince himself that this was the best option, his chest swelling with each breath and pressing up against the tip of the knife.

He was brave, the old angel.

Didn't look it. Didn't act like it, most days, either. But he was.

The point was ludicrously sharp, it had already disappeared into the fabric of the angel's shirt, probably already pricking at the soft skin beneath, and it made Crowley's teeth ache.

Aziraphale took another breath in, this one quick and determined, and with a definite undercurrent of *'Oh fuck it, here goes nothing!'* and then he jolted forward, suddenly, with his eyes closed.

And Crowley, instinctively, moved the blade backwards and away at the very last minute. Because fuck *that*. Fuck this whole thing!

"*Crowley!*" cried the angel, incensed. Popping open his blue eyes and immediately using them to sear into Crowley's eternally damned soul. "What on *earth* are you playing at? I nearly had it!"

The demon shook his head, "No. This is - I'm not - I can't - you are so - *so* -!" He made an inhuman sound in his throat, that summed up his feelings perfectly, "This is *stupid!* This is really, fucking stupid! There's got to be another way."

"My dear, there isn't," Aziraphale said, calmly. "Close your eyes."

"I'm not closing my bloody eyes! I said I'm not doing it, and that's it!"

"You're not thinking about this in the right way. It's a kindness, I assure you."

"It fucking isn't!"

"Of course it is," the angel implored, "I'm sorry to upset you with this, but if that brute gets his hands on me, there's no telling what he'll do. Put the knife back into position and stop making such a fuss."

"Mmmnope, can't. Not doing that. No way."

“If you care about me at all,” said Aziraphale, because he was a manipulative pain in the arse, “if you value our friendship in the least bit, you will do as I ask.”

Right. Remind him again why he was friends with this stubborn old bastard? Was it because he enjoyed tormenting himself?

Fffffff.

The angel was right, though. Sod it all, he really hated when the angel was right. Crowley knew for a fact that Hastur had some really nasty weapons hidden in the folds of his grubby trench coat, the sort of despicable things that could leave more than a psychological scar on an angel.

He wasn't about to let anything like that happen to Aziraphale .

*You're not killing him, Crowley tried to remind himself. You're not, not really. This is just pretend, it's saving him from getting a hot demonic poker shoved up his arse, probably, eh, don't think about that too much, that's weird. Point is. You're not killing him. You'll have a big old laugh about this later, it'll be fucking hilarious.*

He felt his eyes prickle and was glad, not the first time, of his ever present sunglasses. Wouldn't do for the angel to get ideas. Crowley clenched his jaw, and positioned the blade again, the tip pressing into the angel's pristine pastel blue shirt.

Aziraphale smiled, “Thank you.”

Christ. “Don't. Don't you *dare*,” Crowley warned, seethingly.

Another smile, this one dimpled. The angel's grey eyes were brimming over with something warm and affectionate, something that the demon didn't deserve at all, especially not at this moment in time. Not ever, actually.

“You know, my dear,” the angel entreated, gently, “I'd much rather -”

And then in the blink of an eye, he was impossibly close. Their noses touched and Crowley thought for one crazy minute that the angel might kiss him. Then he tilted his head to the side and their cheeks slid over one another, the barest brush of skin on skin.

It was over so quickly that Crowley could barely grasp what the Heaven had happened. His brain couldn't catch up with what he was seeing. There was pressure against his chest. Something digging in.

Wait.

He looked down.

Aziraphale had - he'd -

He had moved so fast that Crowley hadn't even thought to move away, his torso surging forward suddenly and sliding into the blade like a fucking kebab on a skewer. Crowley was

so close that the blade's handle was caught between them, pressing against the demon's own chest, and Aziraphale had used that firm resistance to push the knife in deeper, or he'd never have managed it.

He'd - he'd only gone and impaled himself mid-bloody-sentence! Fuck. *Fuck*. Crowley had been distracted with the angel's stupid beautiful face and beautiful stupid voice - the - the stupid - stupid, brave - bloody *idiot* - the absolute, utter *twat*!

Crowley reared back in horror, his legs suddenly feeling like jelly.

"Oh," Aziraphale barely breathed, quietly breaking through the demon's tumultuous screaming in his own head. The soft skin around the angel's eyes had gathered in abject misery. "Gosh," he said. Completely inadequately.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry I haven't posted in a while. Let me know if you enjoyed this :)  
Next chapter up soon!

# The Best Laid Plans

## Chapter Notes

Whoops, sorry if you guys got a notification early. Had some editing to do and accidentally posted an unfinished mess of a draft! Butterfingers.

I love all of your theories and comments :) and I really hope that you enjoy this chapter featuring a true bastard of an angel...

And please go check out SightKeeper's beautiful artwork and stories if you haven't already :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*"Oh," Aziraphale barely breathed, quietly breaking through the demon's tumultuous screaming in his own head. The soft skin around the angel's eyes had gathered in abject misery. "Gosh," he said. Completely inadequately.*

"Fffsss?!" Crowley spluttered. Yellow eyes wide, as he took in what was left of the knife. It was buried in the angel's chest, right up to the hilt.

"Goodness - goodness me," amended the angel, his eyes wet and pained, "that is... rather unpleasant, actually."

*"Unpleasant? Un-fucking-pleas-?! You're - you - fuck. Fuck!"* He was gonna have nightmares about this for years! For *ever*. Fuck that, he was never sleeping again! He took his hands off the damned handle and raked them into his hair, fisting at the follicles as if they were a particularly stubborn carrot that refused to be pulled from the earth.

The slew of expletives that left his mouth had Aziraphale wincing in more than pain. Though a lot of it was pain, and that was Crowley's fault. He'd done that. He'd - he'd hurt him. He'd run Aziraphale through the heart. He'd killed him.

Ssssatan, what had he done?

What had he *done*?

"Dear, please stop being so dramatic," wheezed the angel, petulantly, "I'm the one who's been inconvenienced. You always have to make things about you."

There was blood welling up between them now, staining Aziraphale's shirt and beloved waistcoat.

"Oh," lamented the angel, "the real tragedy here is my poor suit!"

What? He couldn't be serious. Except he was. What the actual fuck -

“Would you be a dear and have it dry cleaned for me? I’m sure you’ll - you’ll find a way of - seeing to it, before that awful demon can tarnish it further. The shirt may be a lost cause, though. But the rest. Perhaps - perhaps, you might play it off... as a trophy of sorts?”

He was going mad. That must be it.

“You’re - you’re *bleeding* - angel, you’re bleeding all over the place,” Crowley heard himself say, numbly, distantly, every part of his being screaming out that this was wrong, that Aziraphale needed help. Only, he’d been the one to inflict this. What. What. His hands scraped over his cheeks, and then out, fluttering unhelpfully. “What should I - what do I do? You’re bleeding!”

“Not enough,” muttered Aziraphale, white teeth visible as he pained in pain, “you’ll have to - to pull the blade out.”

Crowley recoiled at the suggestion, “I’m not touching it again! I’ve done my bit!”

“Well, I’ll hardly disincorporate fast enough if you don’t do *something*. I hadn’t thought you would want to prolong this any longer than need be. The blood has to be - be free to - to move around, and currently - *ah* - oh, dear me - that is quite - *mmm*.”

Crowley could hardly stand it. “Angel? I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m really fucking sorry -”

Aziraphale sucked in a gurgling breath and a tiny bead of blood shone at the corner of his mouth, like a tiny ruby. “The knife is impeding the flow of blood,” he explained, with disconcerting detachment. “Just - hmmmph - just take a hold of the handle, there’s a good fellow.”

Crowley did so, shakily.

“That’s it,” Aziraphale gentled, “wonderful. You’re doing so well.”

“Shut up. Shut up shut up *shutup* -”

“All right,” a stuttered breath, “now, give it a good tug.”

Crowley did. It didn’t come out.

“Ah!” Cried the angel, eyes scrunching up in pain. White teeth clenching. His hands fisting tightly in the manacles.

“Shit!” Crowley let go immediately, as if he’d been burned. “Shitty bollocking wanky bollocking *wank!*” He continued to spit at the sight of the white-faced, shivering angel, whose face had contorted in such intense pain for a horrible moment before the expression had shuttered away, smoothed over like a rumpled bedsheet. He wasn’t supposed to ever look like that. Crowley was glad the angel had hidden it, because he couldn’t bear the sight - and then he felt awful for ever thinking that Aziraphale should hide what he was feeling from him - he really was the worst, wasn’t he? The worst being imaginable.

“Oh,” blinked the angel, wetly, once he’d regained his faculties. “Oh, I - I thought that might’ve done it but, oh - oh dear, oh dear.” A flicker of pain again, quick and darting, like a shadow, a mere trick of the light. “It is rather stuck in there, isn’t it?”

Crowley nodded, not trusting his voice. Not trusting himself either, after what he’d done.

“Not to worry,” Aziraphale gasped, pathetically, “that’s quite alright. A minor setback. Let me... let me think.”

And he hung there and mused for a few moments with the handle of a bloody knife sticking out of his chest while Crowley replayed the last ten minutes over and over in his head until he was convinced that he was nothing but a vile, despicable monster.

“I think you’ll just have to try again,” concluded the angel, with his eyes closed, “we don’t seem to have very many options. Unless you want to reconsider the decapitation method?”

“*No!* No, I don’t bloody want to *reconsider the decapitation method!* Angel, I can’t do this anymore!” Crowley growled, because it was easier to be angry, “I’m not doing it. It’s hurting you too much!”

“Well, yes it is, rather,” retorted the angel, with a huff of annoyed breath, “because you’re taking too long - you’re working yourself up into a tizzy about it! You need to commit to the task at hand. If you just give it one swift tug -”

“It’s all slippery!”

“Then miracle a tea towel, dear. Do I have to tell you how to do everything?”

“A tea towel?! How is a sodding *tea towel* going to help?”

“Haven’t you ever opened a stubborn jar?”

“I’m a *demon*. If I want a jar open, I miracle it bloody open! Or get at it with my teeth, I don’t - *nggh* - it’s in too deep, angel! I can’t get a good grip on it -”

“You just need to put your back into it, that’s all. Put a little effort in and I’m sure it’ll come right out.”

“Oh, *right*, I’m sorry! Some of us aren’t as strong as you, oh *righteous Principality!* It’s stuck, all right? It’s bloody *stuck!* I tried pulling it out and it didn’t work and that’s that! That’s it! I’m done. We just - we need a new plan.”

“Nonsense,” dismissed the angel, crossly, “perhaps if you just wiggled it slightly -”

“I’m not wiggling it!”

“Just,” Aziraphale’s face was so pale now that he appeared almost ghostly, and there was sweat beading on his forehead that had caused his white blonde hair to stick to the skin in damp curls. And that was alarming in itself. Aziraphale didn’t sweat, he had never performed



enough exercise to warrant it, for one thing. And he'd never allow such a thing to soil his good clothes.

The angel's eyelids drooped further with every hitched, staccato breath, his stupidly long eyelashes fluttering like a fanciful moth.

"Perhaps... it won't matter," Aziraphale murmured, slurring a little. "I am feeling... awfully tired. A few moments more, and I'm sure I'll be well on my way."

Crowley stiffened suddenly.

There, just on the edge of his senses.

He took a deep breath in, tasting it. Essence of warty old toad.

Oh, fuckety fuckety *fuck*.

*Hastur.*

Hastur was here, no doubt come to check on his trap, and he was about to find a dying angel in it and a demon nearby panicking out of his mind.

"He's here - angel, he's *here*," he hissed, suddenly terrified.

Aziraphale blinked exhaustedly at him. "Oh, good. Took him long enough."

"What?"

"It seems we're out of time, there's nothing else - nothing else for it. Come now my dear," murmured the angel, encouragingly, "just one big pull and it'll all be over."

Crowley knew he had to, but -

He couldn't do it. He couldn't - he really really *couldn't*, this was horrible -

Aziraphale was deep into his amateur dramatics by now, putting on a good show for the approaching demon, "Oh, you wicked thing!" Clearly it wasn't his best performance, but Crowley couldn't exactly blame the poor bastard, he did currently have a knife wedged into his vital organs. "Heaven will hear of this! How you *lured* me to my doom! And the vile *torture* - thou hast inflicted - upon my glorious and righteous person!"

"Laying it on a bit thick, angel."

"Don't tell me how to perform my own death scene," chided the angel, in a stage whisper. "I had a hand in some of Shakespeare's finest, you know."

Crowley, who had never liked any of the gloomy ones, rolled his eyes. "Should've guessed."

He got the feeling that if the angel had his hands free, he would have been affecting the look of a swooning maiden, the back of his manicured hand against his forehead. "*Oh, the*

*exquisite agony! The sweet release of death!* Look, just pull it out, would you?” he hissed at Crowley under his breath, “it does sting terribly!”

“I’m *doing it*, just ssstoop talking to me, you’ll blow our cover!”

“He’s behind you,” warned the angel, eyes wide, “best get your acting chops on, my dear - oh, confound you! I admit it! You’ve bested me! None but you has ever been able to capture me! But it shall - it shall not be the last time we meet, far from it! And mark my - my words, you cunning serpent, I shall have my revenge -”

Crowley clenched his eyes shut. Grasped the handle with everything he had left.

And yanked it out.

He cracked one yellow eye open and wished he hadn’t.

The blood squirted out, and that alone was pretty fucking horrible, and hey, maybe he should press pins into his eyes so he never had to witness that traumatising shit ever again. There was blood dripping from the angel’s mouth now too, bubbling up and out of his lips. But the worst part was the sound.

Aziraphale let out an awful, soft whimper of pain. His breath catching, snagging, like a dark claw over soft fabric.

*Sorry*, Crowley screamed with his eyes, *I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m really fuckingsorry - for the love of all that’s unholy please just disincorporate already, before Hastur finds a way to make this even worse - fuck, I’m so sorry -*

And Aziraphale, in his final death throes, winked at him.

He... he bloody *winked*.

As if this was all just a big joke. A silly little magic act that they’d miraculously pulled out of their arse. As if... as if they were in on this charade together and had just outwitted an unsuspecting foe, and oh, my dear, wasn’t it ever so clever of them?

The demon didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. He managed a solitary hiccup.

Crowley could feel it, deep in the very soul of him, when the angel died.

He watched as the light in Aziraphale’s eyes dimmed. Like a candle flickering out in a storm. And then that was it - that was it. He was gone.

The angel’s irises were grey and lifeless, his mouth was slack. He slumped forward and it took all of Crowley’s willpower not to catch him, to cradle him close.

“Oi, couldn’t have saved a bit of fun for me?” Sneered Hastur, from somewhere behind him, his breath reeking of blocked sewer pipes and poo, “I wouldn’ve bovered comin’ so fast if I thought he’d be dead already. Fuck’s sake.”

Crowley steeled himself.

He could do this. He could pretend. He pretended every day of his god-forsaken life. Nothing to it.

The Serpent of Eden affected a cool look, slinking around to face Hastur with an eyebrow raised. Aziraphale's lifeless corporation was behind him now, so he didn't have to see those unseeing eyes. Small mercies, eh?

"Duke Hastur," he smiled his most disconcerting of smiles, "to what do I owe the displeasure?"

The other demon scowled, dark eyes glittering like twin cess pools.

"Don't give me that *bollocks*, Crowley. You know exactly why I got dragged all the way out here." Hastur jabbed a disgruntled, partially decomposed finger into Crowley's chest.

Right atop the tender bruise that the handle of the knife had left, when Aziraphale had - when he'd -

"Prince Beelzebub's given' you a commendation, ain't they, for the 'capture an' torture of a Principality'. Unofficially, o' course. A fucking waste, if you ask me. I woulda done things nice an' slow, made it last, made him *scream*. I mean, watcha even do to him? Bit of amateur stabbing? Puh."

"I tortured him," said Crowley, convincingly, "all the torture, real nasty stuff. Psychological, erm, metaphysical, that too - cosmological, all of that. Real filthy stuff, you wouldn't understand it."

"It was a fucking rush job, and we both know it. But it worked. Yer a lucky little shit, Crowley."

Crowley had the feeling that he was missing something, "Eh?"

Hastur rolled his inky black eyes and bared his rotting teeth. "Well. S'good *timing* innit. 'Nother week and you were gonna get recalled. Back down to the torture pits for a couple of centuries. You must've got desp'rate, eh? Pulled out all the stops to get your hands on this angel."

... Recalled?

What.

Wait.

*What.*

"Word is, you'd gone soft," Hastur went over to inspect Aziraphale's limp body, and grunted almost in admiration. "Ain't never been able to capture this one b'fore. Heaven of a slippery bastard, in't he?" His eyes narrowed into slits, the yellowed skin around them scrunching like

old paper, “Come to think of it, he got outta one of me traps before, nearly took me eyes out with all his horrible light stuff. Couldn’t see straight for weeks. How’d you manage it?”

Crowley’s mouth suddenly went very, very dry.

Aziraphale couldn’t have known.

He couldn’t have known about Crowley being possibly sent Downstairs soon, that was just... it was a coincidence, had to be - the angel was well connected, sure, and kept tabs on all known demons in the area, yeah, but even if he had heard about Crowley being recalled through the grapevine, he wouldn’t have - no, come on, *no*, surely, he never would have orchestrated this whole ridiculous scenario, hanging on just long enough to make it look convincing, complete with God-awful acting, just to... to...

... Holy shit.

That bastard.

That absolute *bastard*.

Crowley swallowed, trying to gather some moisture to wet his tongue. His voice was quiet when he finally found it. “Well,” he rasped, mind going a mile a minute trying to catch up. Focus on Hastur for now, time to completely freak out later. Right. “We all have our secretsss.”

Hastur spat a maggot on the floor, looking uninterested. “Whatever, fine, don’t care. I got me own techniques. How about you get yer own bleedin’ angel trap, next time.”

“Oh, was this *your* trap?” Crowley said, with fake surprise, deciding to roll with it. “I just happened to stop by, thought I’d get some actual use out of it. Doubt it’s seen much action,” he allowed a hint of mocking to enter his voice, “Ought to be thanking me, really. Oh, and *great* idea by the way,” he drawled, “trapping an angel so he can’t even fight back. Just genius, that. It really does it for me, you know, the whole, not getting my hands dirty thing.”

Hastur, who thrilled at getting his hands dirty, who had never had clean hands in his existence, growled out a confused, “Eh? What you waffling on about now?”

“You know, I’m just saying - I think it’s a really great idea, the whole unfair advantage thing. I’d probably do the same, I mean, if I was too weak to fight an angel one on one.”

Hastur glowered, the frog on his head peeping its bulbous eyes out from underneath the white mop of unconvincing hair, “I ain’t too weak to fight that prissy little -!”

“Hey, hey - I’m not shaming you, I’m actually agreeing with your methods.” Crowley put his hands up, innocently, “I’m just saying, it’s really easy to kill them when they’re defenceless, isn’t it? Almost *too* easy, really, takes a bit of fun out of it, if you asked me - but who needs fun, right? Even an imp could’ve managed to nab itself an angel, I reckon, with a trap like this. Could revolutionise the way we do things.”

Hastur had gotten so murderous with anger, that the ground was starting to smoke around his bedraggled shoes, giving off the kind of sulphurous stink one might associate with a soon-to-erupt geyser. “I coulda killed him without the trap! I’m a Duke of *Hell*, not some snivelling little imp! I’ve murdered a hundred of them, me, with no bleedin’ help! I just squeezed their smug little eyes out, popped off their heads, ate all their internal bits with me own teeth!”

*Well*, thought Crowley, *Aziraphale definitely wouldn’t have enjoyed that.*

Crowley, barely, stopped himself from making too disgusted a face. He couldn’t help the slightly simpering bottom lip though. “Weeeelll. Guess you need a *little* help every now and then though, eh? What with the trap and everything, and I don’t wanna call it cheating, necessarily, but -”

*“I don’t need a sodding trap to kill me an angel!”*

And there it was, finally. With any luck there’d be none of these fucking awful things laying about anymore.

“Oh, of *course*.” Crowley nodded, wedging his hands in his pockets and leaning, just so. “*Sure*. Yep. Me too. Don’t worry, your secret’s sssafe with me.”

Hastur went over and dismantled the demonic trap, grumbling under his fetid breath, and with a heated, “*Fuck off*,” he turned into a horde of wriggling maggots and sluiced off down the nearest drain.

“Gladly,” muttered Crowley. He stomped down on a stray maggot that he’d trapped under his snakeskin heel, with no little satisfaction.

And that was that, then.

He was alone. Sort of. Aziraphale’s body had made a soft muffled thump as it had been released from its shackles, and he hadn’t turned around to look at it, but he could feel it just... lying there.

Well, that had been a thing. Hadn’t it. And by ‘thing’ he meant an *absolute fucking diabolical nightmare that would stay with him for the rest of his miserable days*.

He took his hands out of his pockets and looked at them. The blood had dried, flaking and peeling like paint. It had settled into all of the fiddly little lines of his palms and gotten underneath his fingernails.

Aziraphale.

Why would he... why would he do that? Why didn’t he say anything? Did he think Crowley would have wanted him to...?

Fuck. Fuck.

Crowley wiped at his eyes with his sleeve, dislodging his sunglasses.

He hadn't promised that he'd see to the angel's suit, but he was hardly going to leave it in the dirt, was he? Even if, technically, Aziraphale wasn't in it right now.

Corporations deteriorated eventually, just sort of - *poof!* Disappeared. Off into the aether, as if they'd never been. Crowley could wait around until that happened, it wasn't as if he had anything better to do. Then he'd take the stupid clothes to be dry cleaned, because of course he bloody would. He was hopelessly in love and couldn't refuse the angel if he tried.

And he had tried.

Crowley knelt next to the empty corporation, gently rolling it over by its shoulder.

It wasn't him. It wasn't. It just looked like him, but there was nothing of the angel left inside. No sparkling eyes, no annoying witty comebacks, no penchant for delicate petit fours.

Just an empty body.

There was a bit of dirt on its upturned nose. Crowley wiped it off with his sleeve, gently. Then he closed the eyelids with the pad of a trembling finger and leaned in to press a small kiss to the cooling forehead.

The idiot.

## Chapter End Notes

Well, that was a thing. Thank you so much for reading :)  
One chapter left - to be posted as soon as possible!

# Of Stupid Brave Angels

## Chapter Notes

Feeeeeiiiiings.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Crowley didn't feel the presence of the angel for a month.

It was the worst month he'd ever lived through, and he'd lived through some pretty serious shit. Believe him.

The demon didn't know if he'd call what he'd been doing 'living', as technically speaking he didn't even breathe for most of it because his airways were so congested with mucus and feelings. Now that he thought about it, 'moping' might have been a better word for it.

The bright shiny new commendation he'd been awarded meant that he hadn't got anything to bloody do. He was on holiday, effective immediately. And holidays were boring when there wasn't an angel around to spoil.

If he was honest, Crowley had spent most of his free time getting completely and utterly shit-faced on whatever cheap plonk tasted the worst, sat on a certain bench in a certain park, feeling sorry for himself and hissing miserably at any passers by who dared to look like they might be having a nice day.

And then he might have lobbed entire loaves of stale bread at some unsuspecting ducks, and set fire to a few quivering rhododendrons, in an effort to make himself feel better.

It had helped, a bit.

And then - just like that - his senses lit up all at once. A warm familiar pulsing glow, like the sun illuminating the earth and chasing away the cold - and before he knew it, he was miracling himself to the bookshop, eager and urgent and not caring what the Hell anyone thought about it, ta very much.

The bell above the door nearly flew off, as he swept through it. He felt oddly breathless, yellow eyes darting over the bookshelves and dusty antiquated tat the angel liked to accumulate. *Come on, where was the silly old sod -*

"Oh, hullo!"

And there he was. All - all there. All present and accounted for.

Aziraphale.

All clean beige lines, and buttoned up periwinkle blue shirt, white fluff on top, twee little bow tie, dimpled chin. Crowley lapped up the sight like a man dying of thirst.

The angel's pink lips were pressing together in a hopelessly pleased fashion, and his eyes twinkling merrily like something out of a children's book. He was a beautiful bastard, his angel. A real fucking handful.

The demon had it all planned out. Exactly what he was going to say. He was going to tell the angel off. Firmly. That's what he was going to do. He was going to say, in no uncertain terms, that Aziraphale was the bravest idiot he'd ever known and if the angel ever got any stupid ideas about offing himself again for Crowley's benefit, then he would be absolutely *furious*.

He would never take the angel out for lunch or dinner or croissants *ever again*, and he *meant it*.

Of course, all that bollocks got chucked out the metaphorical window as soon as he actually set eyes on Aziraphale.

Crowley took three strides into the shop, right up to the angel, who had never cowered away from him in fear, and still, for some reason, didn't now.

Instead he beamed up at the demon. "How perfectly lovely to see - *ooh!*"

Crowley wrapped his arms around him and pulled him as close as he dared. Which turned out to be very close indeed.

Sod it.

The angel didn't startle, merely accepted the embrace with a small hum of joy. His arms were pinned to his sides by the demon's tight hold, but that didn't stop him wiggling with unexpected happiness, as if the chef had brought out a surprise amuse bouche between courses.

He was alive. He was here. He was - he was pressed up against him and wiggling. It was amazing. And mmff, he was soft, the old angel, in the best of ways. His tummy squished against Crowley's through the layers of fabric. And they fit, didn't they? They fit like this. 'Course they bloody did, he'd known they would for ages.

He was so *relieved* he thought he might burst.

The last time they'd been this close, there'd been a blade caught between them.

Crowley dug his fingernails into the fabric of Aziraphale's coat at the thought, scrunching his eyes shut.

A few seconds passed, then a full minute.

Then five minutes.

Aziraphale cleared his throat, discreetly. "My dear...?"



No. Couldn't he just be bloody quiet for once? Crowley's nails sharpened into claws that pricked into the angel's back warningly.

Aziraphale carried on regardless, as was his wont. There was a slight lilt to the cadence of his voice, it was pitched a little higher in concern, or maybe just confusion, because they didn't do this. This was as close as either of them had ever been to one another. Crowley should let go. He should definitely let go. But he didn't.

"Good gracious, you smell *dreadful*. Have you been drinking?"

Constantly. Non-stop, actually. He'd been celebrating.

"Crowley?"

And, yes, all right, maybe he should've sobered up a smidge. But, fffff. Eh. No point now. Didn't want to, anyway. So there. Much easier to be off his tits on value booze.

"Are you... are you all right?"

Was he all right.

Really? *Really*? Did he *look* bloody *all right*? Christ, how could Aziraphale even ask a question like that, didn't he understand what he'd put Crowley through?

And then, everything that had seemed so rosy a few seconds ago suddenly turned dark. Like a blight on a new flower bud, because he clearly hadn't shouted at it enough.

Was he all right.

No. Fuck, no.

Probably never would be again. But having the angel in his arms, alive, was going a long way to making him not want to jump into a live volcano. So there was that. Jesus Christ. What a stupid fucking question.

"You idiot, you *idiot*," Crowley growled, hissing out a lungful of air menacingly, and tightening his hold. "What the *fuck* were you thinking. Were you even thinking, at all? Did you think I wouldn't figure it out?"

Aziraphale stiffened in his hold, but didn't pull away. "Figure what out? I don't know what you're insinuating. If you'd kindly let go of me, I have some inventory that needs doing. There's been quite the influx of new books since my untimely departure, and I really must see to -"

"Don't - don't you *dare*. We're talking about this, and don't even try to fob me off angel, you can't lie to me. You're terrible at it."

Aziraphale bristled. "I am *not* - actually, I managed to convince you quite well, I thought - oh. Oh. Oh, *bugger*."

Crowley seethed at the admittance, because it was one thing hearing it from smelly old Hastur and another thing entirely hearing it from the angel's own lips. He even had the audacity to sound proud of himself. "I knew it! You manipulative little shit."

"Oh. Ah," the angel shifted a little, guiltily. "So, you've already...?"

"Yes, I've *already*. Hastur came to give a bloody commendation while your body was still warm! *What the hell were you thinking?!*"

"Well, I had hoped you wouldn't find out, actually." The angel took a breath in, Crowley could feel it as it inflated his chest. He wanted to squish the angel tighter so he'd deflate like a balloon. Hopefully he'd make a rude sound to go with it, that way he might be too embarrassed to continue whatever bollocks he was going to say to justify himself. "I won't apologise for it."

Great. Of course he wouldn't, what had the angel got to apologise for anyway? The loss of Crowley's sanity? The fact that he couldn't close his eyes without seeing the worst moment of his life happen all over again? That he'd spent the last month hanging around their favourite spots, waiting to catch a glimpse of the angel, alive, just to make sure that he wasn't actually dead. Because anything could have happened - Aziraphale could have been recalled himself, he could have been denied a new body, he could have been actually hurt by the blade - properly, ethereally hurt -

"You should have told me. It was *my* problem to deal with. It didn't even have anything to do with you at all, but you poked your bloody nose in anyway, didn't you?" he managed to say, between clenched teeth. "I didn't need your help! I would've figured something out in the end."

*Something that didn't involve hurting you.*

Christ. Why didn't Aziraphale understand how much worse he had made everything? There was only one way to properly hurt Crowley, and the angel had gone and done it, with a bloody wink and a giggle.

"Oh, and what would you have done, exactly, if I had told you?" Aziraphale scoffed, tilting his chin upward to glare at Crowley, and having the gall to look annoyed. "You'd have stopped me, that's what! You would never have agreed to it if I'd told you my plan."

"Because it was a *stupid* plan!"

"It most certainly was not. This wasn't something I did on a *whim*, Crowley. I had everything thought out. It was foolproof. Do you know what the actual problem is? Hmm? Do you?"

"M'sure you're about to fuckin' tell me."

"It's that you're a hypocrite! Yes, that's right, a - a *hypocrite*. Oh, yes. It's quite all right for you to be the one doing the saving, but heaven forbid I ever try to return the favour."

"That *isn't* - I'm *not* -! Nghhh! Why do you have to be so infuriating?!"

“Oh, please. I’m hardly to blame for your anger issues. I don’t know why you’re so worked up about this, you can be ever so stubborn sometimes.”

“Stubborn?! Me? *I’m* the stubborn one?”

“Oh, infinitely. Infinitely!”

“*Angel -*”

“This was the only way to convince Downstairs of your loyalty. They were starting to suspect us, Crowley. I *heard* things. You’ve let me win far too many times over the years, and I just knew they were bound to notice sooner or later - they were already looking to recall you, and they - they could have *destroyed* you.” Oh, come on, not that look. Anything but the doe eyes. Please. “Pray, tell me, what else could I have done? What would *you* have done if the situation was reversed?”

“*I wouldn’t have made you stab me, for one!*” shouted Crowley. Because he was pretty sure on that front.

Aziraphale shook his head. “They needed to see that you were willing to harm me. It had to look real.”

“It *was* real. You *died*. You made me watch while you died. Do you have *any idea...*?”

He couldn’t finish his sentence, it was like it had given up the ghost and died somewhere between his brain and his throat. Christ, that wasn’t his voice, was it? Sounded like a strangled cat.

Aziraphale didn’t even call him out on it. “It had to look convincing,” he sounded so insistent, as if he really didn’t get what all the fuss was about.

The stupid - *stupid* -

“Angel. Listen to me very carefully, I’m only going to say this once. Don’t you *ever* do that to me again.”

Aziraphale didn’t answer, but he did attempt to free his arms, lifting them a little. He was probably trying to hug the demon because he was a soppy git and he had a bloody death wish.

... It occurred to Crowley then, that the two of them had managed to have a full blown argument while pressed against one another. His brain short circuited for a moment as he looked down at the angel in his arms. The thing was, it hadn’t even felt out of the ordinary. He wouldn’t even have noticed, if the angel hadn’t tried to bloody hug him.

Stupid angel probably thought that what Crowley was currently doing. Hugging. Well he wasn’t. He was constricting the idiot, crushing him, like the enormous red-bellied serpent that he was. Aziraphale had just gotten the wrong impression, as usual.

“*Don’t*,” growled Crowley, dangerously.

Aziraphale let his arms drop back down with a small huff, and instead, the warm palms gently brushed his hips. As if they were dancing, or something. Holding onto each other like... he didn’t know what like. But it was worse. Much, much worse. Completely awful.

He should let go now. Yep. Any second now.

“At least allow me to say thank you, just this once,” whispered the angel, his breath ghosted along Crowley’s bare collarbone.

Aziraphale didn’t elaborate on what he was thanking the demon for. Which was good, because if it was for... for anything. Then Crowley would be *pissed*. The angel was probably just grateful for the expensive dry cleaning the demon had had done at that ludicrously posh place reserved for the landed gentry. Crowley had dropped the pristine suit off at the bookshop weeks ago, ready for the angel’s return to the land of the living.

Yeah. That was it.

Definitely the dry cleaning.

Crowley buried his head into Aziraphale’s curls and stayed there.

“I’m not saying *thank you*,” Crowley mumbled into the soft hair, breathing in the smell of recently reincorporated angel.

Blech. It would take some time before Aziraphale smelled like himself again. He was too... clean. Bleached. Like disinfectant and impossibly white rooms, echoing footsteps and the awful leeching cold. They hadn’t talked about what Aziraphale had faced in Heaven, but it probably wasn’t anything good.

The angel hadn’t moved away from him, after all, had even welcomed the contact. And that was telling.

A few days in the dust of his poky old shop, and a couple of warm buttery pastries would go a long way to setting the angel back on his feet. It always had in the past.

Crowley would get on that immediately. After this. This definitely-not-a-hug.

“Of course,” murmured the angel, kindly. His fingertips inched around Crowley’s hips, until they reached the small of his back. And it wasn’t a hug. It wasn’t. “I wouldn’t dare to assume you would.”

And the anger pulled back like the tide, the water receding and leaving all sorts of tender things poking out of the sand.

He couldn’t help it. He was still pickled, that was the problem, if he’d just sobered up, it would’ve been fine, but...

It just came out.

A sob, just the one. Tiny. Singular. Quiet. Muffled by clean angel hair. Barely a sound at all really, just a minute hitch of his shoulders. Crowley immediately clenched his mouth shut and hoped to fuck that the angel hadn't heard it.

Aziraphale lifted his head, wonderingly. "Crowley?"

And then, suddenly, his sunglasses had been stolen away by nimble angel fingers, that hadn't been nearly as trapped as Crowley had thought, and the demon was barefaced and vulnerable and trying not to show just how much.

The angel regarded him with concern, his face falling at whatever he found in the demon's closed off expression. His blue eyes grew wide with understanding. "Oh. Oh, my *dear*."

Oh, bollocks. He'd gone and done it now. His entire reputation gone.

The angel looked utterly crestfallen. "I didn't realise. I didn't know that you would be so... affected by it."

Crowley didn't trust himself to speak, just yet. Who knew what would come out. Tears, mucus, bit of acidic demonic bile, declarations of love, fuck knows, but it would be bad.

He squeezed instead. Warningly. His arms were now around the angel's waist, but the bastard just bore the extra rib-cracking pressure without complaint. Anyone else would have turned blue by now.

How could he be so stupid and so clever at the same time. That was Aziraphale all over though, wasn't it? The clever idiot. One big oxymoron.

*I didn't know you would be so affected by it.*

Sure, well, yeah, who would be affected by having to kill their best friend, eh? Not him. He wasn't *affected* by it. Why would he be affected by it? He was a demon. Stabbing people was fun. A jolly old fucking pastime.

"I've rather made a mess of things, haven't I?"

Yes. He always bloody did. Crowley shouldn't even be surprised, really. Should have expected it. Who was the real idiot here, exactly?

"I've... I've been disincorporated by other angels before, on a number of occasions," Aziraphale confided, voice soft and solemn. "There were times when they believed it was easier to just dispose of the physical trappings, instead of having me remain in a dire situation. And do you know, my dear, not a single one of them ever hesitated?"

Well of course they bloody didn't, they were all *twats*.

Demons didn't hesitate either, when it came down to it. They made a sport out of it sometimes. Bit of fun to pass the time. But the point was, neither he nor Aziraphale were like their respective sides, were they? They were supposed to be... something else. They had an arrangement.

The angel still wasn't finished, despite the lack of air in his lungs. Crowley was still doing his best to crush him in the hopes of avoiding listening to him skirt around an apology. "I forgot that you have always been, the most compassionate... the *kindest* person I've ever known."

No. Don't say that. *Don't say that.*

"Aziraphale," Crowley finally said, swallowing around a slew of other things that tried to escape his jaws. "Stop. Talking. *For the love of Satan*. Don't make me kill you again."

Because hey, they could joke about it now, right? It was funny now, wasn't it? It wasn't too soon. Even if it felt like he was going to be sick even thinking about it, it was fine.

"You silly old thing. You didn't kill me the first time, you refused to," Aziraphale reminded him, with those grateful, shining eyes. "It was all my awful doing, and you were only going along with it because you thought you were saving me."

All right. He didn't have to spell it out quite like that. Made a demon feel inadequate, didn't it, knowing how easily manipulated he'd been by this clever bastard of an angel, who could have escaped any time he wanted, and pretty much had Crowley wrapped around the delicate pinky finger that he politely extended while sipping a cup of tea.

But... *why*, was the thing. Why bother with the whole charade? He was sure the angel cared for him, in his own little ways, but putting himself in danger like this - it was too much. Crowley didn't deserve that kind of thing.

"Why would you do that for me?" He dared to ask, because he thrived on the thrill of rejection, and was admittedly still a little sozzled, "It can't have just been for your chance to indulge in amateur dramatics."

Aziraphale huffed, cheeks flushing a little. "I would have thought it was obvious."

It wasn't actually. "S'not."

"Oh, come now, don't make me say it."

Crowley raised his eyebrows. "It was a fucking awful plan, angel. I'm not joking. As plans go, it was the absolute *worst one in the history of existence*. The least you could do is tell me why the hell you thought it was worth it."

The angel was looking at him with something like awe in his eyes. Something like fondness. "It may have been an awful plan, but it worked," said the angel, gently. "I got to keep you here with me."

Oh.

Crowley's heart swelled.

Ow. It was awful, and he hated it.

What the hell was he supposed to say now? That he wanted Aziraphale to keep him, too? He wanted to be kept? Fuck it, the angel could put him in a display case and let him terrorise the window shoppers - hell, he'd gladly just live in the angel's pocket for the rest of his days, if that's what it took.

What had Crowley done to deserve the affections of such a brave and beautiful being?

Right. So. How about he just came out and said it, that'd serve Aziraphale right, wouldn't it. If he thought he could get away with sacrificing himself as if it were no big deal, then Crowley could one up him, couldn't he?

*Listen angel, he'd say. I love you.*

There. Done. Nice and simple. All out in the open. Let's see how the angel liked it.

*In fact, he'd continue, blithely, because he was never any good at not jumping headfirst into things, I've loved you since the first moment I saw you, and it's all gone downhill from there. It might actually be bordering on obsession, now. I'm completely arse over tit in fucking love with you and it's all your fault, you bastard. I mean, I love you even when you set up fucking awful nightmarish scenarios that involve me stabbing you, for Christ's sake. That's how bat shit insane it's gotten. I love you even when you lie to me about your motives behind said bloody stabbing. I love you even when you're so - you're so fucking stupid, and - and clever, and idiotic, and brilliant, and selfless, and selfish - fuck me, angel, I should rip my own demonic heart out of my chest, because it would probably be less bloody painful than the eternal torment of putting up with you.*

Crowley thought about saying all that, he really did.

But Aziraphale was looking up at him, expectantly. And he saw his own terrified eyes reflected in that gaze.

This whole thing had happened because they'd gotten too close, hadn't it? He couldn't say it now. Aziraphale knew anyway. They both knew, they just could never acknowledge it, not while anyone could be listening, maybe not ever. This had to be enough. This weird dynamic they had formed, where they were both perfectly willing to put themselves in harm's way for each other, but Satan forbid they ever admit it.

*I love you, you blithering idiot,* thought Crowley.

"Sod off," he settled for saying, instead.

It was largely ruined by a single, rebellious tear that had escaped his right eye and fallen in a damning line down his cheek.

Oops.

Aziraphale's grey eyes flicked down to watch it fall. And he moved, until they were so close that their noses touched, only, the last time that their noses had brushed each other like this, the angel had - he'd - fuck - Crowley jerked his head back away from him.

But there was a sudden strength that held him. Aziraphale was deceptively strong, beneath all the frumpy frills and trimmings. Crowley should have known that he was never the one holding the angel, Aziraphale never allowed anything to happen unless he wanted it to.

And then - there were lips against his cheek, kissing the tear away. Just like that.

And everything else could go to Hell as far as Crowley was concerned.

All thoughts just - fwoosh! Gone. Was he going somewhere? Hell no. Uh-uh. No way, he would have to be absolutely bloody bonkers to move away when something as utterly mind blowing as this was happening. He tried to memorise the feeling, because who knew if anything this amazing would ever bless his wretched soul again.

Just a small thing, the kiss. Small and momentous.

Those ridiculous pink lips that Crowley had admired over the years, that he wasn't entirely convinced God herself hadn't created just to torment him - the lips he'd ogled as they came together in a moan of pleasure over a chocolate mousse, or pulled apart in a bright smile, or even bloody pouted at him - were now lingering against his own skin. It was perfect in every damned way. The angel's eyes were closed as if in reverence, and the fan of his golden eyelashes was mere millimetres away.

Crowley stared at him, wild eyed, his reptilian pupils probably blown so wide they'd completely swamped any yellow. He could feel them expanding, sucking in the angel's light like twin black holes.

He might have been having a bit of a moment.

Aziraphale had said that he wasn't going to apologise, but there was something delicate and meaningful pressed into the demon's skin by that soft mouth. It was so achingly careful.

Crowley couldn't stand it.

His restraint snapped. The demon grabbed fistfuls of the angel's shirt, with a raw desperation that had been gathering heat inside of him for centuries - fuelled by soft glances, fleeting touches of hands on shoulders, fingers brushing over passed wine glasses, nudges with elbows while they giggled at a play - now it had quickly reached boiling point, and was bubbling over.

He wasn't dreaming this was he - they were both here - both stunningly alive - not hurt, not dying -

Before he even knew what he was doing he was scrabbling to undo the angel's shirt buttons, and Aziraphale, bless him, made no move to stop the vicious pulling of buttons and fabric. The demon tugged the bow tie free of its perfect knot and the angel just blinked up at him with trusting eyes as if nothing unusual was happening.

Once the shirt was open, Crowley just... stared.



He stared and stared.

Aziraphale's chest was unmarked, unblemished, the skin smooth under his trembling fingers as he dared to reach out and touch it, unable to stop himself because his eyes were telling him one thing and his mind was screaming something else.

He laid a hand over the angel's heart. There. See? He was being stupid and he knew it. Everything was fine. The angel's heart was beating, even though it didn't need to. Steady and sure, and admittedly a little fast, but that was probably on account of the kissing.

'Cause he'd totally kissed the demon just now.

On the cheek, yeah, but shhhh, he was counting it.

He'd kissed him, and he was alive and he'd kissed him and he was alive *alive* -

Aziraphale's face crumpled, he put his warm hands over Crowley's splayed fingers that still lay flat against his chest, and clutched at them tightly.

"Oh," he breathed, looking forlorn. "I'm all right, I'm all right. I promise."

And he was. The demon could feel the evidence under his palm, and tingling across his cheek. He could almost taste it on his tongue and sense it glowing in front of him like an obnoxiously big moon on another plane of existence.

All right, enough.

Enough of all this emotional bollocks, he was gonna get hives if this carried on. Big pustulous unsightly boils! He took his hand back from Aziraphale's warm grasp and shoved it in his pocket where it belonged.

Anything to stop the angel looking like *that*.

Just. Breathe. Reign it in. Shove it under the metaphorical carpet. Right.

Wait, wait a second.

Holy crap, he'd just undone Aziraphale's shirt buttons. Five of them. Look at that - the angel was practically naked.

And he'd kissed Crowley, too.

He'd kissed the demon and then let said demon undress him. Well well well.

"Oh, angel," Crowley leered, in as seductive as a tone as he could muster, waggling his eyebrows up and down to cover the wobble in his voice. "You *kissed* me."

Aziraphale's worried frown morphed into a look of surprise, then tentative hope. "Well," he cleared his throat, "Well, you were crying. I was merely offering comfort."

“Psh, *comfort*. That wasn’t comfort, angel. That was practically pornographic -”

“I *beg* your pardon? Pornographic? *Really*.”

“- loaded with sordid lusty lewd grotesque imaginings, I’m impressed to be honest. Didn’t think you had it in you.”

Aziraphale rolled his eyes, the tiniest smile pulling at his lips. “It was a friendly gesture, and nothing else! I wouldn’t expect you to understand. Comforting lowly creatures is part of my Heavenly duty, I’ll have you know - I’m afraid that any *lustful imaginings* are entirely on your part alone.”

“Oh yeah, right, sure. Heavenly duty, is it?”

An amused dimple appeared on his cheek. “Exactly.”

“And I bet Gabriel goes around kissing a bunch of demons, then, does he? Just goes around *smooching the imps*.”

“I couldn’t possibly comment on the inclinations of my superiors,” huffed the angel, delightedly, “as well you know.”

Didn’t stop him most of the time though, did it? Crowley grinned. Give the angel a few glasses of Pinot noir and he’d be commenting on his superiors’ inclinations ‘til the bloody sun came up.

Aziraphale started to do the buttons back up on his shirt collar, in a meticulous and regimented manner befitting of a soldier of the Lord, looking mildly annoyed at having to do so. He cast his gaze around on the floor, searchingly. “You didn’t have to fling my poor bow tie quite so far, Crowley - oh, blast, where on earth has it gotten to?”

“Heat of the moment, angel,” Crowley said with a shrug. “Can’t blame me. Shouldn’t have snogged me if you didn’t want me to get handsy.”

“Shouldn’t have -” the angel’s face coloured dramatically, “- oh! Oh, good *Lord*, Crowley.” Aziraphale cried out in mock outrage, an impossibly relieved smile breaking out onto his face for a second, like a flash of silver catching the light, before it was smothered over with an indignant pout. “It was hardly a - a -”

“SNOG,” Crowley reiterated, helpfully. “A *snog* angel,” he poked at his damp cheek, “right here. I’ve got the evidence. Of the snog. See?”

He hadn’t known it was possible for someone to go that particular shade of pink. Maybe there was a problem with the angel’s new corporation, because at the moment Aziraphale could give a fuschia plant a run for its money. It was obscene. It was glorious. “It was most definitely not a -”

“Go on, sssay it.”

“It was not a - a *snog*, Crowley,” hissed the angel, barely even daring to whisper the ‘s’ word, his blue eyes darting about warily, “it was *nothing of the sort*. I would have thought, what with the terrible trouble you’ve gotten into lately, that you wouldn’t want to draw unneeded attention to any of our physical contact - ah, not that we have any physical contact. Or any contact. Ever. In fact, I don’t even know you. Yes, that’s it - perhaps you ought to leave. Begone, stranger.”

The demon, as usual, ignored him.

“Right. Well, I’m just saying, if I’d have known *that* would be my reward,” remarked Crowley, with a lopsided smile. “I might’ve stabbed you earlier.”

Aziraphale found his bow tie with a flick of his wrist and promptly smacked the demon with it. “Oh, you wicked, *beastly* thing!”

“Oi, watch it, angel! Just for future reference - what injury do I have to inflict to get a bit of tongue, next time?”

“*Crowley!*”

After that, it was simple.

Well.

It went back to the way things had always been. And that was enough, wasn’t it? Had to be.

They had both agreed to see each other less often in order to avoid further suspicion, and all right, so Crowley had gone back on that promise within the first few days because he couldn’t stand it... big deal.

And so, he might’ve had a few horrifying nightmares since. So, yeah, he sometimes panicked if he couldn’t feel the angel nearby and popped into existence at Aziraphale’s elbow, startling the angel into dropping a few priceless tomes, or a cup of hot cocoa, or on one memorable occasion, an entire bookcase - on his foot.

That was normal.

Aziraphale had seemed to come to some conclusion about him, and beneath the bickering, prim pursed lips, and snooty huffs, the angel treated him impossibly gingerly. He accepted any gifts without a fuss, and his hand sometimes lingered on Crowley’s shoulder in greeting.

Okay, so maybe, just maybe, Crowley wasn’t all right, yet.

But Aziraphale *was*, and that was all that had ever really mattered to the demon anyway.

As always, thank you so much for taking the time to read this :D There are a few more little stories I might post, if they'd be welcomed. Comments and kudos make me smile! :)

Works inspired by this one

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